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The ‘future’ the bourgeoisie wants:

Back to mass poverty!

Another day, another worrying news item. One minute a sudden squall blows away the Dutch government’s oddly cherished triple-A credit rating; the next, the UK officially announces it is mired in – “double dip” – recession. That most distinguished of French dailies, Le Monde, carries a pre-May Day editorial headed “Spanish crisis rocks Europe”. Then the Greek people resoundingly toss out Papademos, the banker “democratically” inflicted on them as chief puppet in a government of marionettes.

The first round of the Greek elections was certainly a powerful rejection of the austerity imposed by the bourgeoisie’s puny, misbegotten Europe.

Actually the bourgeoisie is in pretty poor shape, both as a whole and in each of its various national formations. The world crisis is far from over, in fact, it looks like getting worse. The bourgeoisie exploits it but suffers from it too, so they are trying even harder to get out of it safely – at the expense of working people, of course, since that is how they do things. So they impose wartime-style policies, on Greece at the moment, but soon on Portugal, Spain and the rest.

Each one in a shock sequence of devastating austerity plans has come with a cynical guarantee that it will finally solve the problem. But in all these countries – especially for working people – things are getting worse by the day. The awful debts are spiralling upwards, the exact opposite of what was promised. Bloodthirsty capital inflicts these “rescues”

**from behind a shroud of anonymity that also hides its servants and face-
less, unelected and incompetent hangers-on lurking in the shadows of
that self-perpetuating authority they loftily but misleadingly call “Euro-
pean Union”.**
The Troika (European Commission, European Central Bank and

**International Monetary Fund), helped and supported by world capital,
simply impose colonial satraps on entire countries and dictate their policy.
These local henchmen include at least two wily old hands from Goldman
Sachs, the US bank notorious for greed and guile. Papademos in Greece
and Monti in Italy were both parachuted in – neither of them by way of
an election – to run puppet governments in the glorious name of democ-
racy, the creed all these gentlemen lyingly profess to support. They didn’t
need to use force, all they had to do was pass on the names, since the
existing governments welcomed these bankers as saviours, the majority
“socialist” PASOK in Greece no less than the unfrocked “Eurocommunist”
bureaucrats in Italy. But as we know, the Greek people resoundingly
rejected this arrangement and sent them packing.**
**Europe’s two-faced architects toil away, producing
sinister results**
**In November-December 2011, I wrote that the way European coun-
tries’ debts were spiralling and uncontrollably feeding off themselves as
interest rates increased:
“…means that it will never be possible to pay the debts back” (Stop
the Destruction of Social Gains, Socialist Studies Pamphlet, p.17)**

and
that “for a prolonged period the crisis is only going to get worse” (ibid. p.18).
Indeed, the bourgeoisie’s public affairs people (pretty well all their
lower-ranking agents) were doing their fevered best to push these na-
tions over “the brink of the precipice”, to borrow a phrase, not from an
opponent of the system, but Patrick Artus, an economist whose devotion
to it is beyond question.
How deep is this precipice? Their Europe has clearly split in two, even the most frankly favoured eurozone bit. You don’t need to be clair-
voyant to see the tension constantly growing between the two sides, driv-
ing them apart by their own momentum like galaxies. The language vari-
ous countries use about each other is already ripe and it will get worse
are the gap grows. Frightened by the outcome of the May elections in
Greece, Le Monde starts by describing it as “chaos”, then, even more ami-
ably informs the Greek people they have “voted the wrong way” and

must re-run the election. The certified democrats in Brussels, as ever,
blithely ignore reality and assume that they are the true guardians of
European unity. You can count on it: the wider the gaps grow between
the different parts, the more grimly they will cling to “unity”.
Take a closer look at Greece. Not long ago, I and others said how urgent it was for the working people of Europe to respond quickly, in a
knee-jerk reaction, as it were, to the call for help from the Greek activists
Glezos and Theodorakis. Well, apart from some public voices raised and

fraternal action by trade unionists and political activists in the UK, nothing happened. We have to say that for all the many official announcements, one European initiative announced by the general staffs of the trade union amounted to little more than a few very limited local actions. The action as a whole was a washout because the trade union leaders (especially the ETUC, the European Trades Union Confederation) obviously lacked the will. The trade union leaderships couldn't even manage to organise a big action in Brussels to defend Greece's working people against the capitalists plundering them, and their Greek and European agents and touts. There is still time, though, and we must do something.

Thanks to the various "rescue" attempts by its kindly European "saviours", the Greek state is literally falling apart. That unforgettable educator of the proletariat, Antonio Gramsci, examined and laid bare the "integral state" of capitalism in its dotage. It was actually never particularly robust in Greece anyway, and now it is melting away before our very eyes, exposing at its heart the violence of the repressive apparatus. The parties of corrupt worthies, suspended in mid-air and ordered about by the arrogant, tax-levying financiers who back them, offer barely a threadbare fig-leaf, behind which we can glimpse the menacing profiles of generals. Never forget that throughout the whole history of Greek working people, these mercenaries of capital have drowned them in blood every time they have dared raise their heads. Many people still

bear physi-
cal and psychological scars from ill-treatment suffered in their gaols not
so long ago. No doubt the same torturers are again standing by to force a
proud and defiant people to do as capital commands, just as soon as
they can get away with it. Their political advance guard, the resolute
fascist group, has already appeared on the scene. Fortunately, for the

time being they are held in check by the formidable resistance and mobi-
lisation of working people. Also, by throwing out the bourgeois accom-
plices and agents of austerity, the elections too increased the specific
weight of working people. In fact for several years now they have, day in
and day out, proudly and indomitably resisted the implacable dictates
of the masters of European and international capital, relayed by local
stewards cowering behind police lines.
We all know that the general strike is a powerful, redoubtable but highly dangerous weapon which the working class turns to when it has
to defy and contest the power of the bourgeoisie, and also as a final warn-
ing when its very existence as a class is threatened. Since the attacks
started, aimed at reducing this cradle of democracy to a mere colony,
and its inhabitants to impoverished natives, the Greek working class has
on five occasions risen in an all-out general strike against all those al-
leged democrats tormenting them in their own country. But they cannot
just go on using up their strength in endless general strikes, any more

than their Portuguese and Spanish comrades who are boldly repeating similar tactics. (To grasp the full gravity of the situation, read the interview with Greek philosophy lecturer at London University, Stathis Kouvelakis, with its very precise and striking depiction of the sufferings and the struggles of the Greek people, published in the Revue des Livres, Paris, March-April 2012). The more working people fritter away their strength in heroic – but exhausting – actions, the more deaf and unfeeling their persecutors become. Indeed these persecutors grow bolder, as if trying deliberately to provoke a situation where they can inflict a death blow.

Trade unions must mobilise

Out of the blood and toil of the resistance put up by significant sectors of the European working class, one irrefutable fact emerges: to halt the bourgeoisie's general offensive, we need to mount a united struggle on a comparable – Europe-wide – scale. When it comes to blocking these attacks on the rights and gains working people have achieved, and driving the offensive back on itself, struggles confined to individual countries one after the other in isolation are doomed to fail. And a partial success on a national level, as in Greece, at least partially strengthens

one section of the enemy too, and exasperates others. This is true even though the attacks are fine-tuned to reflect the particular features of each country. It would be a fatal mistake to fall into a nationally-blinkered outlook, when Greece, Portugal and Spain make it painfully clear

that struggles which are national in scope will not do, because they can be isolated.

However, the unions do have the experience needed to avoid this and similar snares. Even leaders who up to now have been lured by the siren voices of a false, lying "partnership" with states and employers against workers are now caught up in a struggle against capital's offensive and its plans to reduce Southern Europe to slavery. Indeed, faced with the distress people there are in and the threat of demoralisation, these leaders have shown some desire to sharpen their act and prepare a more consistent struggle. The unions have thrown themselves into the fight in Greece, Portugal and Spain, and they are getting ready to do the same in Italy and elsewhere. Even in France the unions have started to stir.

The Confedération Générale du Travail (CGT) is the most significant centre of working class activity in the country. During the recent election campaign, its Executive Committee roundly condemned the policy of outgoing President Sarkozy. Everybody knows that the deposed President was the bourgeoisie's second-in-command next to Merkel. He was the Godfather of Blitzkrieg against the working class, which he toughened, honed and nurtured. Without him, the European Fiscal Treaty of evil memory would hardly have got off the ground. In response, on 13 March, the CGT Executive Committee warned that if he was re-elected, this "… would almost certainly open a new round of severe social re-

gression … and French society … would sink deeper and deeper into crisis". Barely a month later its leader, Bernard Thibault, underlined this point in an interview with Le Monde newspaper where he stated that:

"all European trade unions are opposed to the European Treaty (initiated by Sarkozy) which generalises social austerity and insecurity".

Although we should not foster illusions, this is a definite step towards undoing the repellent and paralysing straitjacket of "social partnership" which holds back and stifles working people's struggles. Limited as such statements are, they mean a lot because they break the un-

ions' silence over the "political neutrality" which is one of the main planks of "partnership". (Sarkozy understood this perfectly. He immediately re-vamped his "simply" anti-social rhetoric into downright fascist eructations, particularly venomous about benefits "scroungers" and "busybody mediators" (particularly trade unions), not to mention other favourite fascist targets such as immigrants … most of whom are workers.

He thus revealed his spontaneous tendency towards fascism. This led the other big trade union centre, the originally Christian – and much more conciliationist towards employers and their state – Confedération Française Démocratique du Travail [CFDT], to protest as well).

These French trade union leaders are perfectly well aware – particularly the CGT – that the Greek and other working people in Southern Europe cannot win on their own and isolated each in their own country

because they are up against a stronger enemy. They cannot win any tangible results that way, never mind score an actual success. The only at all realistic and practical way to fight successfully is internationally, specifically on a Europe-wide level. The CGT is particularly well placed to launch and organise such a fight to bring real aid to the working people of Europe: Greek, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, not to mention the French and all the rest.

They have taken a first step, and now we all hope they will see it through. You can only say: "well done and get on with it", hoping they will link up with sister bodies across Europe at present thrust into still scattered and unequal struggles. That is also the only way they can escape the humiliating, degrading, wounding and paralysing chains of a "partnership" where they are the servants of the master. The CGT has the depth of resources needed to initiate and deploy such a struggle along with its sisters in Europe and to mount an immediate and directly international line of defence, full of ambitious actions aimed at the focus and source of the attacks in Brussels.

Nobody can tell in advance how the French unions, especially the CGT, will react to capital's offensive, which without a shadow of a doubt will grow stronger. It would be terrible if the internal conflict over the succession caused by Thibault's approaching retirement from presidency of the confederation were to provide the leadership with an excuse for not coming up with the favourable response people expect.

Economists and experts at a loss, ill at ease and at odds

Unsurprisingly, with a few rare and muted exceptions, the vast majority of economists and the countless self-appointed experts were at first completely stunned and overwhelmed by the scope and violence of the crisis. Think about it.

Trained in years of the all-embracing hegemony of (so-called "neo") liberalism (although that was knocked back for a while by the general crisis of 1929-1937), not one of them anticipated the general upheaval and they have still not got over the shock. They imbibed the "self-regulating markets" dogma of "neo" liberalism with their mothers' milk, so to speak, and it has permeated and contaminated every pore of society.

They were totally dazzled and poisoned by it. The main, monetarist, segment of this fetishistic catechism (M. Friedman and his many imitators) unanimously announced that crises belong among the imperfections of a distant past. Consequently his followers and disciples have classified the frequent present-day partial and unconsummated – and therefore incomplete – manifestations of crisis under one or another purely linguistic category in order to efface, obliterate and/or corrupt their meaning, thus falsifying reality. So today's vulgar economists dub these manifestations "dysfunctions". Their utter and sincere stupefaction in the face of a social tempest therefore speaks volumes.

Their economic credo refused to acknowledge crises and expressed and promoted a veritable infatuation with trivialities, so of course they had to wage a crusade against Marxism. It was (and is) the other side of

the (forged) coin of their paeans to neo-liberalism. To justify their cru-
sading zeal, these economists did not hesitate to use as ammunition the
repulsive practice and anti-Marxist ideology of Stalinism, although they
are perfectly well aware that he and his supporters entirely liquidated
the party of the revolution, physically exterminating its members in their
tens of thousands, and locking them up in their millions. Unable to re-
fute Marx's theories, they relentlessly condemn the Stalinist epigones
who falsified him and whom they actually applauded not so long ago.
As for Marx, Engels and Marxist theory, they at most poke inane fun at
it, on the assumption that the mere mention of the vile Stalin and his
regime releases them from any obligation to deal with it properly. One

can only welcome any who, although not themselves Marxists, did not
howl with these wolves.
How instructive it is, we must add here, that the leaderships of socialist or social democratic workers' parties have long since publicly
and officially repudiated Marxism, starting with the German SPD at it
Bad Godesberg Congress in 1959. This made it easier for them to spread
their policy of class collaboration in often violent opposition to the theory
and practice of class struggle. As for the Stalinist parties, fed with the
dogmas of a falsified, distorted, deformed and formal, Marxism, their
leaderships finally slyly abandoned even those stale, insipid leftovers.
They too did so in the attempt – admittedly more difficult in their

case –
to line up with other collaborators with the bourgeoisie in denying and
recanting the class struggle. Some of them went so far as to throw the
very name “Communist” overboard.
So it is quite understandable that the intellectuals’ great turn to the
right on the heels of a succession of defeats for the workers’ movement
and a series of gyrations on the part of their failed leaders, was also
marked by a recantation and massive rejection of Marxism. This is not
the place to examine it in detail, just to note that besides historians, phi-
losophers, literati, etc, it also involved a turn by economists, not merely
away from Marxism but also from Keynesianism, that mongrel refuge to
which the bourgeoisie resorted when forced to make concessions to a
menacing working class.
Neo-liberalism is particularly clueless in the rather significant mat-
ter of Europe, or specifically, how to unify it. This was the goal that its
initiators set themselves, although they were also clueless about how to
achieve this happy consummation. Now in practical reality, the process
has barely started and, contrary to expectations, vows and promises, not
to mention specific statements, it has already produced striking inequal-
ity which is actually growing ever faster: inequality between the classes
in each country and inequality between individual countries. It has be-
come a common topic of general and somewhat anguished discussion.
Even economists normally anxious to sell the ideology of Europe have a

great deal to say about how it presents itself and takes shape; the ones
who notice it anyway, unlike its stubborn devotees – and there are still
lots of them – who ignore the evidence or don't consider this inequality

worth bothering about.
But those who do actually worry about such an about-turn from supposed progress towards unity into its exact opposite present a spectacle of various stages of disenchantment. First the stupefaction provoked by the this cruel blow undermining what had been reassuring certainty; then growing incredulity, doubt or downright scepticism; finally, bypassing any actual explanation of the phenomenon, they lose themselves, divided and perplexed, in conjectures and misty and evasive speculation. And so they launch into fantastic wanderings, each one as extravagant as the other is absurd.
(I am not talking here about the backward-looking dreams of "deglobalisation" or a "non-productivist" economy, nor their equally reactionary and illusory twins, protectionism and the call to consume only products of the national soil. Such views undoubtedly flourish as distorted side-effects of the mass rejection of the situation provoked by the Europe of capital. They particularly flourished in the overheated atmosphere of the French election campaign, for example, during which the more prudent and thoughtful politicians, alongside a shrinking remnant of the liberal bourgeoisie and fundamentally disorientated petit bourgeois, clashed with official defenders of the hated capitalist

offensive. At the same time there were, limited still but significant, attempts to beat a path for working people, and don't forget for an instant, on the opposite side, the reactionary but dangerous disquisitions of the fascists.) So it is absolutely normal that in the intellectual desert created as a sort of bonus under the omnipresent protection of capital, practically all specialists and experts in "economic matters" (leaving aside a few rare dissident voices) are sincerely stupefied by how this glaring inequality has arisen in a Europe unexpectedly torn apart. This is really too much, especially given that they had been blind to the approaching crisis in the first place. The surprise and astonishment is all the greater since for decades, lined up behind the capitalists and those responsible for their European mission, they endlessly sang the praises of a supposed convergence of nations, first the Common Market and then the European Union. They were gripped by unshakeable faith in fraternal cooperation and solidarity between countries – which to tell the truth was closer to St Augustine's "I believe it because it is absurd" than to any objective analy-

sis. It was a rude awakening, so painful that they still keep step with the gurus of capital and their European representatives, mechanically repeating all the twaddle they come out with.

However, the obvious failure of all these "rescues" and the growing sufferings of the people thus "rescued", not to mention their growing resistance, raise painfully embarrassing questions. Doubts

**emerge,
new ways out are sought, and this accentuates and multiplies differences
between them over a possible solution. To go by some spokespersons,
the disarray among them is practically total, and that is confirmed from
outside by how often they change their minds and the obvious contra-
dictions in the positions they put forward.**

The real meaning of inequality in Europe

**The unhealthy imbalance developing between the eurozone coun-
tries (but not sparing the others) as the crisis unfolds has its impact on
how people think, including economists. First of all it is important to
grasp that this inequality is not just a fixed difference between these coun-
tries placed neutrally side by side, arising from their different develop-
ment. Of course there are such differences between countries, marked
by their different geographical locations and their varied natural at-
tributes, but above all shaped by and steeped in their own specific histo-
ries. I am not talking here about the inequality that arises from their his-
tory and heritage, although that continues to influence the one I do mean.**

**The growing inequality between countries in question here is not
exactly the same as the one between classes, although there is an organic
link between the two. It is a living, dynamic relationship, in a sustained
movement, which measures, compares and describes the relationship
between countries and their economic development. What is this rela-
tionship all about? And where does this inequality come from?**

**To reply to these questions, the first essential thing to grasp, which
should never be forgotten, is that this inequality develops**

between dif-
ferent countries with an identical capitalist system. The accent is on the
capitalist character of their mode of production and their society, which
implies that the inequality between these countries develops inevitably,
as if dictated by fate, in line with their respective powers and capacities.
Now, one of the principal characteristics of this system of exploitation is